

million border crossings, shattering the previous record. In December, Customs and Border Protection encountered more than a quarter of a million migrants at the southern border—a quarter of a million people in a single month, which is a new record.

The President has not offered a single serious plan to address this crisis. Secretary Mayorkas keeps saying: Well, this is something Congress needs to weigh in on. But they have engaged in zero outreach or any visible indication that they actually do want a congressionally passed solution to this problem, one that the President would have to sign into law.

The only policy changes that the President has offered will do nothing to stop people from coming because they just parole them faster. In other words, they show up at the border, and they are given a piece of paper and told: Go to the closest Immigration and Customs Enforcement office in wherever it is you are locating in the interior of the United States—with no followup and no real assurance that they will actually go to an ICE office and ultimately end up in front of an immigration judge.

We know that is part of the game, too, because if the human smugglers flood the zone with people, they can overwhelm the capacity of our immigration court system to actually deal with these asylum cases. Those who ultimately end up before an immigration judge are only successful in roughly 10 to 15 percent of the cases, but if you flood the zone with enough people, you can overwhelm the capacity of the court system, and you can basically succeed in living permanently in the United States even though you have not complied with our immigration laws to do so.

We know that for 2 years, the men and women on the frontline of the border have been pleading with the administration to do something. Law enforcement are understaffed and overwhelmed by the workload they are expected to shoulder.

Nonprofit organizations and local governments are trying to mitigate the humanitarian crisis that has landed on their doorstep, and legitimate trade and travel have taken a big hit. Mexico was our single largest trading partner. Yet legitimate trade and travel are hampered by this flood of humanity coming across the border as well.

So I hope the President will be candid with the American people tonight and acknowledge not only what he views as his successes but where more work needs to be done. Now that he no longer enjoys a majority in the House and the Senate but now has a divided Congress, I hope he is candid enough to acknowledge that the only way we are going to be able to solve some of these problems is to finally work together to do so.

We know that what the President shouldn't say is that he will somehow use his Executive powers to create new

categories of immigrants or microscopic pilot programs. It needs to center on the basic idea of enforcing our immigration laws and reforming our asylum system. That is the only way to restore order and get this crisis under control.

Legal immigration has, to my mind, been one of the greatest successes America has to show to the rest of the world—legal immigration, orderly, humane, and legal—but what we are seeing now is the antithesis of orderly, humane, or legal. It is just the opposite.

We know our country is facing a diverse set of challenges in our homes, schools, workplaces, and along the border, and on the world stage, democracy itself continues to be under attack by hostile autocrats and dictators. The American people deserve to hear the President explain his plan to address each of these looming challenges, and I hope he does so tonight.

Once the State of the Union concludes, Arkansas Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders will deliver the Republican address. She is a champion for workers and families who have been left behind. I look forward to hearing her response to President Biden's speech, and I expect to see a stark contrast between the cloistered unrealities of the Biden administration and the reality that American families are facing.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee.

DEBT CEILING

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, as my colleague from Texas said, people are looking forward to hearing what the President will say and what he will not say tonight.

As I have been home over the weekend, one of the things I have heard from Tennesseans about is the out-of-control Federal spending.

Now, we know what the Democrats have done in plussing up the budget for the last couple of years, but one number kind of stuck with me, and it is about \$3.6 trillion—that is taxpayer dollars—that has been spent on Democratic wish-list items. A lot of this is the Green New Deal. A lot of this is the reckless spending agenda they are pushing.

Now, they forced through, in 2021, \$1.85 trillion in spending. Then they came back around, and they wanted to talk about inflation. Joe Biden had 1.4 percent inflation when he took office, and because of this out-of-control spending and spending more and more and more and hundreds of billions of dollars, we saw inflation in June of 2022 hit 9.1 percent. People are frustrated about this.

But one of the things that got Tennesseans was the fact that this President didn't say: Well, it is because we put all this money—Federal spending—your dollars—we are putting these back out there. No, he blamed Vladimir Putin. It was Putin's fault. To Tennesseans, this was outrageous. It was the “go blame somebody else” game.

The Biden administration's neglect of the economy and their complete disregard for the destructive effects of their spending is something that has caught the attention of Tennesseans. This term for this President wasn't even halfway over, and already his policies are making everyday life too expensive to afford.

To be clear, Tennesseans talk to me about being worried about the basics of life: food security, food for the table, clothes for the kids, gas for the car. They feel like this agenda, this set of priorities that this administration has, is just peeling away a lot of their life, their living, their enjoyment, because there is no extra money left over. It is all going into necessities.

They are struggling to manage 6.5 percent inflation. They are looking at the cost of food that is up 13 percent from where it was a year ago. Keeping the heat on in this cold winter is 15 percent more. And it is the same story when you talk about school supplies and when you talk about clothes for the kids.

It is the same story here in Washington, where it seems that Joe Biden and this administration and the Democrats are once again poised and ready to spend more money. They are wanting to raise the debt ceiling without even a conversation about spending cuts. To Tennesseans, that is outrageous.

Now, my Democratic colleagues have spent a lot of time talking about what will happen if Congress fails to raise the debt ceiling, and I don't think anyone here denies that the country has some serious discussions that need to be had. But I would ask my colleagues to remember that raising the debt ceiling is not a green light to keep spending money until we crash into another debt ceiling.

Tennesseans understand this. They spent 2 years cutting costs because common sense told them that you just can't keep spending with reckless abandon, and they want to know why the Democrats in Washington don't get this. Yes, indeed, everybody spends too much up here; but why are my Democratic colleagues unwilling to talk about making any cuts?

Now there are some things that we could do to start this process. There are three bills that I file every single year. When the Presiding Officer and I were across the dome in the House, I would file these bills every single year, because it is common sense. They would make a 1-percent or a 2-percent or a 5-percent across-the-board spending cut. Every Federal Agency ought to be able to do that. The American people do that. Making that one penny out of a dollar reduction in spending would save us money.

There again, you do this in the discretionary spending to get things rolling. Start it there—a penny in a dollar. How about two pennies in a dollar? If you take a penny out of a dollar, that would save you \$5.2 billion. If you did

that just in discretionary—didn't do it in the military, didn't do it in mandatory spending—just discretionary—2 cents out of the dollar, then you are going to get more than \$10 billion in savings. These are small, little steps. But, you know what? In the end, if you do that, if you cut a nickel out, it saves \$26 billion. Do it every year. Do it so we are not wasting taxpayers' money.

This is not government money. It is not your money. It is not my money. It is not the money of this Chamber or the House. It is the money of the people of this country, and we are charged with spending that carefully, accountably, and transparently to the people.

Tennesseans cannot take and they will not accept another year of this reckless spending. They are demanding change, and this is the barest minimum of what they would accept—tiny little cuts like that, just in the right direction, and then holding to it. Don't come back in 2 years and say: We have to raise the debt. They want to see some structural change.

Now, unfortunately, the President has said that he has no plans to negotiate his spending levels. It will be interesting to see what he has to say about this tonight, because to Tennesseans, it is almost, unfortunately—somebody said this weekend—it is laughable. It is shameful that he does not want to negotiate, that he is not going to talk about spending less, that he only wants to talk about spending more.

Senate Democrats cannot keep putting off this debate in order to save the President's failed agenda. Our job is not to serve the White House. It is to serve the American people. And they are saying: Do something about the wasteful, out-of-control spending.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 5.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Cindy K. Chung, of Pennsylvania, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Third Circuit.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 5, Cindy K. Chung, of Pennsylvania, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Third Circuit.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Debbie Stabenow, Margaret Wood Hassan, Brian Schatz, Tina Smith, Elizabeth Warren, Tim Kaine, Ron Wyden, Patty Murray, Chris Van Hollen, Martin Heinrich, Jack Reed, Christopher A. Coons, Alex Padilla, Christopher Murphy, Sheldon Whitehouse, Richard Blumenthal.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 9.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Gina R. Mendez-Miro, of Puerto Rico, to be United States District Judge for the District of Puerto Rico.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 9, Gina R. Mendez-Miro, of Puerto Rico, to be United States District Judge for the District of Puerto Rico.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Sheldon Whitehouse, Martin Heinrich, Tim Kaine, Tammy Baldwin, Ben Ray Lujan, Tammy Duckworth, John W.

Hickenlooper, Amy Klobuchar, Jack Reed, Jeanne Shaheen, Benjamin L. Cardin, Edward J. Markey, Alex Padilla, Margaret Wood Hassan, Catherine Cortez Masto.

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for the cloture motions filed today, February 7, be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCHUMER. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 3, DeAndrea Gist Benjamin, of South Carolina, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fourth Circuit.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Sheldon Whitehouse, Martin Heinrich, Tim Kaine, Tammy Baldwin, Ben Ray Lujan, Tammy Duckworth, John W. Hickenlooper, Amy Klobuchar, Jack Reed, Jeanne Shaheen, Benjamin L. Cardin, Edward J. Markey, Alex Padilla, Margaret Wood Hassan, Catherine Cortez Masto.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of DeAndrea Gist Benjamin, of South Carolina, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fourth Circuit, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM) and the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 54, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 6 Ex.]

YEAS—54

Baldwin	Cortez Masto	Kaine
Bennet	Duckworth	Kelly
Blumenthal	Durbin	King
Booker	Feinstein	Klobuchar
Cantwell	Fetterman	Lujan
Cardin	Gillibrand	Manchin
Carper	Hassan	Markey
Casey	Heinrich	Menendez
Collins	Hickenlooper	Merkley
Coons	Hirono	Murkowski